

# Spotlight

A publication of Seattle's  
Human Services Department

**Mayor's Office  
for Senior Citizens**

**Summer 2004**

## Honoring the Greatest Generation



**by Mayor Greg Nickels**

In June, with the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion, in which Allied troops stormed Normandy beaches to liberate Europe from Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany, I took time to reflect upon the Greatest Generation. That is the term coined by news anchor and author Tom Brokaw to describe the Americans who came of age during the Great Depression and Second World War and went on to build modern America.

I thought about those who lived through the Depression, their economic desperation, and their fight for survival. I thought about how the world changed when the United States entered World War II. American industries flourished as they converted to war production. The Boeing Company and local shipyards fulfilled huge contracts.

I grew up hearing about the heroic acts of the soldiers in the D-Day invasion and subsequent battles. I heard glorious stories of liberation. I heard stories about women going to work in factories, offices, the military, and the media to support the war effort, and how that changed the economic agenda for women in later years.

I also heard horrific stories about the concentration camps at Auschwitz, Dachau, and elsewhere. The atrocities of the Holocaust must never be forgotten, lest the past is allowed to be repeated.



*Bob Nickels served in the U.S. Navy during World War II.*

class at Chicago's DePaul Academy graduated a semester early so the students could enlist.

I do not wish to glamorize or romanticize this period in history. There is no way to justify the incarceration of Japanese Americans, almost 10,000 from this county alone. And although the decision to drop atomic bombs ended the war, that decision brought tremendous death, destruction, and misery to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

The men and women of this generation experienced great sacrifice during the war and after. With the Baby Boom, their sacrifice continued on behalf of their children. As the oldest of six, I watched our home and our Seattle neighborhood swell with children. At one time, there were 113 children living on our block alone.

When Germany finally surrendered, the fighting continued elsewhere. My dad served in the Navy in the Pacific Theatre, as did his brother, Bill. They were on different ships but ran into one another a couple of times. Dad was a radar repairman second class. His high school

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Seattle experienced profound change during the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Our state's voters elected Warren G. Magnuson and Henry M. Jackson to the U.S. Senate six times each. Two of my heroes, Senators Magnuson and Jackson helped shape the world we know today through hydroelectric power, international trade, health, consumer education, and environmental protection. The World's Fair and Forward Thrust created lasting legacies. There were rallies for peace, civil rights, women's rights, and

organized labor, causes that did not belong entirely to a younger generation. Many older Seattleites championed peace and equality then and continue to be involved today.

I applaud the values that united the Greatest Generation — duty, honor, economy, courage, service, love of family and country, and, above all, responsibility for oneself — and the contributions that helped make Seattle what it is today. 🌸



## **Raising grandchildren presents new challenges**

**by Cynthia Ellison**

Juel, Frances, Linda and Renee are grandparents who are raising their own grandchildren. They go to the Rainier Beach Family Center every Thursday to attend a support group for other grandparents who have the same challenges. They eat dinner, talk about their feelings and gain strength from sharing.

Sometimes, guest speakers from other organizations attend and provide information about additional community resources that can help “kinship caregivers,” meaning people who have taken responsibility for caring for young relatives — siblings, nieces, nephews or, most often, grandchildren. Typically, individuals become kinship caregivers because the children's parent or parents are deceased or struggling with issues such as being teen parents, substance abuse, mental illness, criminal behavior and child abuse.

Juel, Frances, Linda and Renee remember how hard it was raising their children. Now, with age, fixed income and health issues, they find it even more challenging to raise grandchildren.

Juel has had children in her home for the past 35 years. Currently she is raising four of her 13 grandchildren. They range from 8 to 18 years of age. At one time, she was raising six grandchildren. “I do not want them in the state system,” said Juel. “I want to give them the life that I tried to give their mother.”

Frances finds it difficult to raise her three grandchildren on few resources. She has had two open heart surgeries, lives on Social Security Disability Income, and receives \$87 for food assistance once a month. At one time, she was raising a fourth grandchild. She tried to become a foster parent in order to receive more state support for raising her grandchildren, but she was turned down

because she was the biological grandparent and legal guardian.

"I live in Section 8 (federally subsidized) housing and have checked around for assistance to help me pay my utility bills," said Frances.

"Unfortunately, I can't receive much assistance because I live in public housing. I was able to get a small amount of money from one community program, but by the time I received that assistance, another utility bill was due. I still owe a large amount on the remaining balance."

Linda and Renee are also well versed in state resources. "A single unemployed person receives more food assistance than a grandparent raising a grandchild," said Renee. "I would like better food and produce at the food banks," said Linda. "Our grandchildren need proper nutrition to live healthier lives. I am hoping the Legislature will provide grandparents with enough assistance to raise their grandchildren."

According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), nearly one million grandparents are rearing their grandchildren. Even with peer support groups, kinship caregivers often need money and other resources to help raise their young relatives — food, shoes, clothing, school supplies and money for extracurricular activities.

Although many grandparents are experiencing hard times, there is some good news, thanks to State Representative Eric Pettigrew, who has championed kinship care in Washington State. The State's Kinship Caregiver Support Program can provide one-time assistance for critical or urgent needs to grandparents (or relatives of any age) who have primary care responsibility for relatives under age 18. For information, call 1-888-4ELDERS (435-3377).



## **Kinship Caregiver Resources**

### **AARP Grandparents Information Center**

601 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20049

Toll-free 800-434-2296 Email [member@aarp.org](mailto:member@aarp.org) and

Web [www.aarp.org/life/grand](http://www.aarp.org/life/grand)

### **Grandparent/Kin Support Group**

Rays West Hill Family Enrichment Center

12704 76th Ave S, Seattle 98178

Cynthia Green 206-772-2050

Email [cynthiag@rays.org](mailto:cynthiag@rays.org)

### **Grandparents and Relatives Re-parenting**

Northwest Family Center / Casey Family Programs

1123 23rd Ave, Seattle 98122

Abbey Moon Jordan 206-731-2557

Email [abbey.moon@metrokc.gov](mailto:abbey.moon@metrokc.gov)

### **Grandparents as Parents**

Rainier Family Center

4600 38th Avenue, Seattle 98118

Indiana Allen 206-595-9047

Email [iallen7002@aol.com](mailto:iallen7002@aol.com)

### **Grandparents and Kinshipcare In Action Support Group**

Rainier Beach Family Center (Atlantic Street Center)

8825 Rainier Ave S, Seattle 98118

Teresa Everett 206-723-1301

Email [tamsens@atlanticstreet.org](mailto:tamsens@atlanticstreet.org)

### **Kinship Caregivers Support Groups**

Southeast Youth and Family Services

3722 S Hudson St, Seattle 98118

Gwendolyn Jimerson 206-721-5542, Ext 45

Email [gwendola59@yahoo.com](mailto:gwendola59@yahoo.com)

### **Kinship Support Group**

Ujima Community Services

6419 Martin Luther King Jr Way S, Seattle 98118

Danielle Clayton 206-760-3456

Email [danielle@ococujima.org](mailto:danielle@ococujima.org)

### **North Seattle Support Group**

Luther Memorial Church

N 132nd St & Greenwood Ave N, Seattle 98133

Elise Bowditch 206-783-7701

# Universal design makes homes more livable

by Sandra C. Hartje

My house in Seattle's Maple Leaf neighborhood, built in 1997, is relatively new. It is typical of new construction — 2,500 square feet and three floors, including a walkout basement and three bedrooms, all on the top floor. To enter the house, one has to walk up six stairs to the front entrance, 20 stairs to the back-deck entrance, or through the garage and up a flight of stairs to the main floor, where family life happens.

This house won't easily support me aging in place. I'll live in it for another 10 years, if that, and then what? Will I choose to move out of my house, neighborhood and community to a house with a supportive design? Wouldn't it have made more sense to design a home that supports people throughout their lives? Wouldn't it have been more reasonable to design the structural elements of a home so one could modify it later, when necessary, without incurring huge costs and major disruption to one's life?

This experience has helped me to envision my next home, which will be "universally" designed.

## Universal design

Universal design means the design of products and environments that can be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. It meets the needs of as many users as possible, whether they are children, seniors, or individuals hampered by disease or disability. It recognizes and accommodates the changes people experience during their lives.

Housing greatly affects the quality of our lives. The architectural features of a home can support or hinder our ability to function comfortably, conveniently, and safely. Incorporating universal design features in planning stages of home



*A curbless shower is one element of universal design.*

construction can enable people to live in their homes throughout their lives, without the need for extensive modifications or relocation. It is more psychologically supportive and cost-effective over time.

## Universal design features benefit all

Universal design incorporates both "visitable" and accessible design. At the most basic level, universal design represents the concept of "visitability," or basic accessibility to a home by someone who uses mobility equipment. Concrete Change, an international effort to make all homes visitable, specifies three essentials of a visitable home:

- ◆ At least one entrance that has no steps
- ◆ Main-floor interior doors, including bathrooms, have 32 inches of passage space
- ◆ At least one half-bath on the main floor

Universal design goes beyond visitable and accessible housing design. Additional universal design features are:

- ◆ Clear space inside and outside entrance doors (5' x 5')
- ◆ A view of visitors via windows
- ◆ A place to put packages while opening exterior doors, such as a built-in shelf
- ◆ A three-quarter bathroom on the main level with a curbless shower measuring at least 5 by 3 feet

- ◆ Hand-held, adjustable showerheads in all tubs and showers
- ◆ Variable-height countertops
- ◆ Full-extension, pull-out drawers, shelves and racks in base cabinets
- ◆ Adjustable-height shelves in wall cabinets

Local interest in universal design is growing. The City of Seattle's 2002 housing levy states that "applicants are strongly encouraged, to the maximum extent financially feasible, to incorporate universal design principles in housing units developed under the rental production and neighborhood opportunity programs." A current

Seattle Housing Authority project contains universal design features, while a major renovation of the Salishan Housing Project in Tacoma includes the main "visitability" features. As people see how well universal design works for everyone, I hope the concept will expand into all housing markets.

*Sandra C. Hartje, Ph.D., is an associate professor of interior design and housing at Seattle Pacific University. A longer article with the same title was published by the Housing Washington 2003 conference; excerpts are reprinted here with the author's permission. ❁*

## How to find relief from property taxes

If you're on a fixed income or retired from regular employment due to disability, you might be eligible for property tax relief.

For many years, the state has provided property tax exemption and deferral programs to seniors and persons with disabilities who have low incomes. County assessors administer these programs. While the Assessor will continue to establish the market value of your home and programs do not relieve enrolled property owners from paying property taxes, you may find relief from tax increases and/or an opportunity to defer payment until your property changes hands.

Although these programs could save a taxpayer hundreds or even thousands of dollars each year, only a portion of the eligible seniors who qualify for tax relief have applied.

**Property tax exemptions for 2005** are available for persons with incomes less than \$35,000 per year and who are 61 or older prior to December 31, 2004 or retired due to disability. If you qualify, the county would freeze the assessed value of your home. While you live

there, it would be exempt from property tax increases that result from excess levies, and possibly from a portion of regular levies, depending on your household income.



Excess or special levies are levies that require voter approval and provide money for a specific purpose, such as school construction or maintenance and operations.

**Property tax deferrals** are available for people with total household incomes less than \$40,000 per year who are 60 or older or retired due to disability. This option reduces the amount of taxes owed by postponing payment until the home is sold or transferred, or until the qualifying homeowner no longer lives there.

This spring the state Legislature broadened the definition of disability by tying it to the Social Security definition: The inability to engage in substantial gainful activity due to physical or mental impairment. Due to this and other category changes, anyone currently on the

exemption program or those previously denied an exemption will automatically receive a new application.

You can request applications for the exemption and deferral programs by calling the King

County Assessor's Exemptions Unit at 206-296-3920, or at [www.metrokc.gov/assessor/Exemptions/Exemptions.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/assessor/Exemptions/Exemptions.htm) on the Web. Forms will be mailed to you in December. ❀

## Title V puts skills to work

by Cynthia Ellison

Barbara Jackson was retired but still wanted part-time work. Her goal was to stay active but not pursue a stressful job. Before retiring, Barbara held several jobs and developed many skills. Some of her work experiences included bookkeeper, psychiatric ward clerk, financial interviewer, secretarial work and superior court clerk. After retiring, she worked as a janitor but she wanted a change. She wanted to do something that she loved.

Jackson's change came when she heard about the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program. She visited the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens' Age 55+ Employment Resource Center to get more information.

The Title V Program is a job-training program that provides temporary, part-time, paid work experience in community services. Enrollees must be 55 years or older, live in King County, and have an income below a specific threshold.

"Like many women, Barbara worked hard all of her life and raised children," said Alana Mclalwain, the Employment Resource Center supervisor. "She still wants to work. I knew she would be a good fit for the Title V program." Jackson, who has a certificate in floral design, was hired by Cheryl Brown, recreation specialist at the Garfield Community Center Senior Adult Program, to plan and teach arts and crafts.



*Barbara enjoys a moment in a tree on a senior field trip.*

Jackson teaches classes on mosaic art, furniture refinishing, and tabletop fountains, and help coordinate field trips. She's always looking for new ideas.

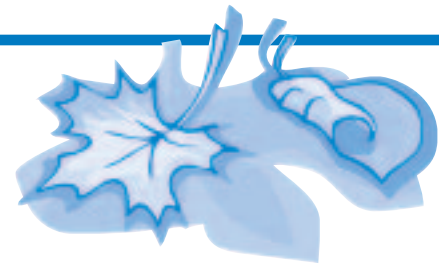
"Although I'm retired, I have the opportunity to earn a little more money," said Barbara. "I love teaching and I know we will enjoy many new crafts as we move along."

For more information about Garfield Community Center senior classes, call 206-233-7255.

For information about the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program, call the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens at 206-684-0500 or go to [www.seattle.gov/humanservices/mosc/](http://www.seattle.gov/humanservices/mosc/) on the Web.



# Special Events



## **“Roots” Family Picnic: Bridging the Generation Gap**

**Sunday, September 5**

The Breakfast Group, Northwest Black Pioneers and the Roots Group are co-sponsors of this multi-generational social gathering to strengthen family and community ties. Each family should bring a picnic lunch including food, beverages and utensils, as well as favorite games, blankets, chairs, etc. Participants will spend the day getting to know others and enjoying live music by local musicians.

**Time:** 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

**Place:** Gasworks Park

*For more information, call Paul Mitchell, 206-506-7557; Dr. Robert Gary, 206-723-3298; or Joanne Williams, 206-722-4095.*

## **Greater Seattle Senior Leisure Games**

**Friday, September 10 – Sunday, September 12**

The Greater Seattle Senior Games, a nonprofit organization that promotes health, fitness and a positive image for older adults, is sponsoring a fall event called Leisure Games. Enjoy archery, ballroom dance, bocce, brain games, bridge, chess, croquet, horseshoes, jazzercise, lawn bowling, line dancing and more.

**Place:** Sand Point Magnuson Park, 7400 Sand Point Way NE

*For more information, call Seattle Parks and Recreation at 206-684-4951 or go to [www.cityofseattle.net/parks/Seniors/games.htm](http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/Seniors/games.htm) on the Web.*

## **Senior Day at the Bank of America Tower**

**Sunday, September 12**

Adults 65 and over are invited to enjoy the spectacular view from the observation deck of the Bank of America Center (formerly the Columbia Seafirst Tower). Free; pre-registration is not required.

The deck is wheelchair accessible.

**Time:** 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

**Place:** Bank of America Center, 701 5th Avenue (5th & Columbia)

*For more information, call the Mayor’s Office for Senior Citizens at 206-684-0500.*

## **Mature Workers Alliance Resource Fair**

**Wednesday, September 15**

Workers over 50 seeking to freshen up job-hunting skills, spruce up résumés and learn where to find jobs are invited to a free resource fair sponsored by the Mature Workers Alliance. Workshops include starting a business, reinventing oneself, job-hunting strategies, using computers and the Internet to find jobs, and managing a second career.

**Time:** 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

**Place:** Seattle Center House, 305 Harrison St

*For more information, call the Mature Workers Alliance at 206-427-9250, send e-mail to [info@matureworkersalliance.org](mailto:info@matureworkersalliance.org), or go to [www.matureworkersalliance.org](http://www.matureworkersalliance.org) on the Web.*

## **Senior Halloween Dance**

**Monday, October 25**

The Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens, Seattle Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Program, and Seattle Center invite you to attend this annual dance. Seniors are encouraged to wear a costume or mask. Prizes will be awarded. Admission is free, but food bank donations are welcome.

**Time:** 1–3 p.m.

**Place:** Seattle Center House, 305 Harrison St

*For more information, call the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens at 206-684-0500.*

## **Senior Holiday Ball**

**Monday, December 6**

Seniors from throughout Seattle and King County are invited to enjoy the big band sound of a local orchestra. Admission is free.

**Time:** 1–4 p.m.

**Place:** Seattle Center House, 305 Harrison St

*For more information, call the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens at 206-684-0500.*

## **Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens Holiday Open House**

**Thursday, December 16**

Mayor Greg Nickels and the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens invite you to this annual holiday open house. Celebrate the season and learn more about services available to older adults and persons with disabilities. Light refreshments will be served.

**Time:** 2–4 p.m.

**Place:** Alaska Building, Suite 250, 618 2nd Ave.

*For more information, call the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens at 206-684-0500. ❁*



### **Spotlight**

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The Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens, part of Seattle/King County Aging and Disability Services and the Seattle Human Services Department, complies with all federal, state, and local laws prohibiting discrimination.

Accommodations for persons with disabilities will be provided upon request.

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